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SUBJECT: PRT/HELMAND HELMAND GOVERNOR DISCUSSES
PRT TRANSITION WITH UK OFFICIALS

1.(SBU) SUMMARY: Helmand Governor Engineer Daoud told UK Preliminary Operations Commander Colonel Messenger on February 5 that a smooth transition is important in order to protect Helmands security. The Governor would like to see the UK focus on: (1) building capacity among law enforcement elements; and (2) monitoring the border with Pakistan. The Governor said that he was not happy with the location of the PRT, claiming that the PRT was too close to residential areas. COL Messenger said that the UK is looking forward to a real partnership with Helmand. There will be increased civilian expertise available, but development would be the province of the Department for International Development (DFID). UK forces plan to become involved in as many districts as possible. END SUMMARY.

2.(SBU) UK Preliminary Operations Commander Colonel Gordon Messenger visited the PRT on February 5-6 to observe the ongoing transition. He met with Helmand Governor Daoud to discuss the UK deployment and to hear the Governor's views on the upcoming change from a US to a UK PRT.

3.(SBU) GOVERNORS CONCERNS: Governor Daoud brought up a number of issues. He said his paramount concern was that the transition proceeds smoothly to ensure the best security possible, noting that Helmands security is fragile. With the Taliban increasing its pressure on Helmand, the Coalition should have a strong presence. The Coalition presence had not been strong in Helmand, and it seemed the Taliban had taken this as a sign of weakness, Daoud added. Weak Afghan National Police (ANP) and National Directorate of Security (NDS) forces have contributed to the provinces security woes. The Governor also expressed concern (as he has done on other occasions) about Helmands 162 kilometer border with Pakistan. The Governor said that the provincial forces were unable to control this area, which is a key route for drug smuggling and Taliban movement in and out of Helmand. He asked that the UK monitor the border to improve security.

4.(SBU) Colonel Messenger agreed that security is an issue in the province. With the arrival of about 2,000 UK troops, plus the Afghan National Army (ANA) brigade, security should improve quite rapidly. As for the weak law enforcement component, one of the UKs goals is to substantially improve their capacity. As for the border, while the UK will be unable to maintain a permanent presence, UK and ANA forces will make occasional patrols. That, along with improving ANP and Border Police capacity as well as more border posts, should improve security. Colonel Messenger cautioned that it was not possible to hermetically seal a border of that length in a desert area.

5.(SBU) IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPMENT: Concerning PRT TRANSITION WITH UK OFFICIALS development, the Governor said that the people of Helmand would be watching to see what the outputs are. He added that development was a key component of transforming Helmands economy from one essentially dependent on opium to one based on legitimate agriculture. Colonel Messenger said that at there would be a full-time DFID representative in charge of development. The UK military would not be

involved in significant reconstruction activities as the US military has been.

6.(SBU) PRT LOCATION: The Governor said that he was unhappy with the PRTs location, which was too near residential areas and, according to the Lashkar Gah Master Plan, was in an area that was intended for government administrative buildings. (Note: This master plan is about 35 years old. End Note.) As the city has grown, the Governor said, the PRT location was becoming more central. He suggested that the PRT move to an area proximate to the airfield (about five kilometers from the present location).

7.(SBU) Colonel Messenger told the Governor that, while he understood the concern, it would be impractical to move the PRT, especially since improvements and upgrades had begun. He noted that eventually the provincial government would inherit some of the facilities. Also, the previous us provincial administration had decided on the PRTs location.

8.(SBU) COMMENT: The meeting appeared to reassure Governor Daoud that, while the US and UK have somewhat different approaches to the PRT, there will be continuity, along with a focus on improving security, a major concern in Helmand. The 2,000 UK troops and an ANA brigade should go a long way to improving security and (hopefully) enabling increased NGO engagement in Helmand to implement other development projects. END COMMENT.

9.(U) Dushanbe minimize considered.

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